

1/8/16 - Cable Community Church

Order of Service

- ◇ PRELUDE
- ◇ WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS
- ◇ SCRIPTURE READING -- # 660 - Redemption
- ◇ PRAYER
- ◇ GREETING TIME -- # 42 - Seek Ye First
- ◇ PRAISE AND PRAYER REQUESTS
- ◇ CHILDREN'S SERMON
- ◇ OFFERING
- ◇ HYMN -- # 2 - Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing
- ◇ SERMON
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PRAYER REQUESTS

Joyful Hope

Jeremiah 31:7-14

Eight days into the New Year, it's not uncommon for some of us to experience what the specialists call "Post-Holiday Blues." The emotions of the holidays are wearing off, and we sit even deeper than we were two months ago in the refuse of this season: debt, and isolation. The heap of post-party debris. The decorations, now looking tired and drab. The wretched awaiting of the next credit card bill. The re-scattering of children and grandchildren to the distant cities they inhabit these days. All of these things, and more, combine to cast a grey pall of gloom over our New Year's mood.

It does us little good to learn from the Bible that the ancient Israelites had it worse than do we. The prophet Jeremiah assures us that they did, but that does little to lift the cloud of gloom. We turn from channel to channel only to be reminded of recession, depressed housing values, ballooning national debt, ranting pundits, endless wars abroad, and the intractable red/blue domestic conflict that cripples our politics and wounds our churches. And on and on. We wonder, to ourselves or to the heavens, "Lord, where are You in all of this mess?"

Our Scripture today comes from a section from Jeremiah called by scholars "The Book of Consolation." Jeremiah looks into a future time when the exiles from both Northern and Southern Kingdoms shall have a wonderful homecoming. They shall sing shout, proclaim and give praise to God for delivering them out of exile. Among those whom the LORD shall gather are: the blind, the lame, those who are pregnant and those in labor. Jeremiah, speaking God's message, tells the exiles: "With weeping they shall come, and with consolations, I will lead them back." After the prophet goes on to assure the people that the LORD will grant the returning exiles health and prosperity in their homeland; he then says the LORD shall reverse their grieving into rejoicing: "I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow."

In the beginning of a new year, we tend to be in a more reflective mood - focussing on the passage of time, and what we do with time and time does with us. Do our lives really matter? Do they make a difference? How do we best serve our LORD and his Church? What word of hope and consolation is there for us? In times like these, we all need to be reminded of and encouraged by "the bigger picture."

Follow along as I read this morning's text from Jeremiah 31:7-14, where we are reminded of what we too quickly and too often forget. The Lord has rescued His children. He has delivered them again and again from "hands too strong" for them. In today's text we are reminded that ...

despite our PRESENT CONDITION

God has PROMISED HOPE and ...

we are to PROCLAIM REDEMPTION

I. Body

A. despite our PRESENT CONDITION (vv. 8 & 11)

a) **Apart from God, things always look hopeless**

1. scattered

- a) from "Babylon" or "Assyria" (the North country)
- b) to the farthest parts of the earth
- c) Isaiah 43:5-6 -- Fear not, for I am with you;
I will bring your descendants from the east,
And gather you from the west;
I will say to the north, 'Give them up!'
And to the south, 'Do not keep them back!'
Bring My sons from afar,
And My daughters from the ends of the earth

2. unable to move

- a) stuck where they are
- b) cannot respond to God's commands
- c) injured
- d) infirm

3. held by a Strongman

- a) Isaiah 49:24-25 -- Shall the prey be taken from the
mighty, Or the captives of the righteous[a] be delivered?
But thus says the LORD:
" Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away,
And the prey of the terrible be delivered;
For I will contend with him who contends with you,
And I will save your children.

4. Hopelessness can destroy everything

- a) One night at dinner a man, who had spent many summers in Maine, fascinated his companions by telling of his experiences in a little town named Flagstaff. The town was to be flooded, as part of a large lake for which a dam was being built. In the months before it was to be flooded, all improvements and repairs in the whole town were stopped. What was the use of painting a house if it were going to be covered with water in six months? Why repair anything when the whole village was going to be wiped out? So, week by week, the whole town became more and more bedraggled, more gone to seed, more woebegone. Then he added by way of explanation: "Where there is no faith in the future, there is no power in the present."

B. God has PROMISED HOPE (vv. 7b, 9, 12-14)

a) **God is the ultimate change agent**

1. Salvation

a) Save your people, Lord

b) Isaiah 12:6 -- Cry out and shout, O inhabitant of Zion,
For great is the Holy One of Israel in your midst!"

2. Reconciliation

a) with tears of joy

b) and pleas for mercy

3. Fruitfulness

a) their crops, herds - even their very lives are overflowing in
the goodness of the Lord

4. Joy

a) to both young and old

5. Blessing

a) all are satisfied with His goodness

6. The Three "I Wills..."

a) I will lead....

b) I will turn...

c) I will satiate...

C. we are to PROCLAIM REDEMPTION (vv. 7a & 10)

a) **Spread Good News to All The Nations!**

1. To the nations (v. 7a)

a) from the highest places in all the nations

b) a public proclamation

c) in the sight of all people

2. To those far away coastlands (v. 10)

a) the nations are called both

(1) to hear and

(2) to declare

3. Bob Woods tells the story of a couple who took their son, 11, and daughter, 7, to Carlsbad Caverns. As always, when the tour reached the deepest point in the cavern, the guide turned off all the lights to dramatize how completely dark and silent it is below the earth's surface. The little girl, suddenly enveloped in utter darkness, was frightened and began to cry. Immediately was heard the voice of her brother: "Don't cry. Somebody here knows how to turn on the lights." In a real sense, that is the message of the gospel: light is available, even when darkness seems overwhelming. The Light of The World came into our darkness.

II. Conclusion

- A. What's your message for this new year?
- B. Years ago, Elton John released the single, "Blessed." In the song, a man assures his unborn child, "You'll be blessed. You'll have the best. I promise you that."
 - 1. This is nothing more than a wish of a parent for his child. He may or may not be able to make good on all of the promises in that song. "You'll have the best," he sings. Have the best what? Home? Vacations? Education? Some may be better than others, but who can say which is best?
 - 2. In an attempt to be somewhat mystical, he even promises to "pick a star from the sky, pull your name from a hat." The last time my name got pulled from a hat I won a gift card at a grand opening in Aledo.
- C. More recently, Christian recording artist Matt Redman recorded a song called "Blessed be Your Name".
 - 1. He sings
 - a) You give and take away / You give and take away
 - b) My heart will choose to say / Lord, blessed be Your name
 - 2. It's easy to say "I am blessed" when the Lord is giving to us. When we realize all that He has blessed us with; salvation, new life and a hope for eternity. But we are also blessed whenever God removes something from our lives that - in His wisdom - He knows we are better off without. He really KNOWS what's best.
- D. People all around us need to hear the hope-filled news that says that the blessing of a Heavenly Father who cares for them is available to all who will receive.
- E. Even in the darkest hour, people cannot live without hope. As followers of Jesus, may we move into another new year with the hope and consolation of our LORD. Like Jeremiah, may we too be messengers and bearers of this hope and consolation to our loved ones, friends and neighbors; as well as to the whole world. For our lives and our world are not destined to doom and gloom. Rather, we can live, as did Jeremiah, with the hope and consolation that God is still at work to redeem and save us from all forms of exile - powers stronger than we are — including the powers of evil, sin and death. The world, the Church, and all of our lives are in good hands. The hands of our loving Father.
- F. That, friend, is GOOD NEWS for all the nations.